

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY

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FOLLOWING REPEAT MANAGUA 0020 SENT ACTION SECSTATE DTG 3 JAN 75

QUOTE:

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORS, PINS, NU

SUBJECT: COUNTRY TEAM ESTIMATE OF TERRORIST INCIDENT

REF: MANAGUA 5001 AND PREVIOUS SITREPS.

1. FOLLOWING IS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS FOR TERRORIST INCIDENT OF DECEMBER 27-30:

DEC 27 - 7:00 - 9:00 P.M. RECEPTION SCHEDULED IN HONOR OF AMBASSADOR SHELTON IN MANAGUA HOME OF FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER JOSE MARIA CASTILLO.

10:10 P.M. AMBASSADOR SHELTON DEPARTED.

10:20 P.M. TERRORISTS (BELIEVED TO BE 14 IN NUMBER INCLUDING 4 WOMEN) ARRIVED WITH SUB-MACHINE GUNS, PISTOLS AND HAND GRENADES, ATTACKED HOUSE, GUNNED DOWN TWO NATIONAL GUARD (GN) ENLISTED MEN WHO SERVED AS CHAUFFEUR/BODYGUARDS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND WOUNDED A THIRD. AFTER FSLN GAINED ENTRY INTO HOUSE, CASTILLO WAS KILLED ALLEGEDLY BY A FEMALE TERRORIST AS HE ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN A WEAPON AND RESIST ASSAULT. ONE OF THE GUESTS, LEONEL SOMOZA ABREGO, SON OF MAJOR GENERAL JOSE R. SOMOZA, HALF-BROTHER OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA .

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ESCAPED THROUGH GARAGE DOOR AND IMMEDIATELY NOTIFIED HIS FATHER. ALL

OTHER PERSONS IN THE HOUSE, A TOTAL OF ABOUT 30, WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE.

- - SOON AFTER HOUSE WAS TAKEN, THE AREA WAS CORDONED OFF BY ELEMENTS OF THE MANAGUA POLICE AND SURROUNDED BY GN TROOPS FROM 1ST ARMORED BATTALION AND FIFTH COMPANY.

DEC 28 - 12:30 A.M. GENERAL JOSE SOMOZA RECEIVED CALL FROM TERRORISTS DEMANDING RELEASE OF 14 PRISONERS, AN UNDISCLOSED SUM OF MONEY AND A PLANE.

1:00 A.M. - MRS. CARPENTER, DAUGHTER OF CASTILLO AND WIFE OF U.S. CITIZEN DAVID B. CARPENTER, WAS RELEASED FROM HOUSE AND TAKEN TO GENERAL JOSE SOMOZA'S OFFICE. SHE WAS NEAR HYSTERIA AND OF LITTLE USE IN CLARIFYING SITUATION.

3:30 A.M. - PRESIDENT SOMOZA WHO HAD BEEN VACATIONING ON CORN ISLAND HURRIEDLY RETURNED TO MANAGUA TO TAKE CHARGE.

6:00 A.M. - ARCHBISHOP OF MANAGUA, MIGUEL OBANDO Y BRAVO, WHO HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY FSLN TERRORISTS TO SERVE AS INTERMEDIARY, ENTERED HOUSE FOR DISCUSSIONS.

7:00 A.M. - ARCHBISHOP LEFT CASTILLO HOUSE AND CONVEYED TERRORISTS' DEMANDS TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA. LEAVING THE HOUSE WITH THE ARCHBISHOP WERE SERVANTS, MUSICIANS AND SEVERAL GUESTS INCLUDING ALL WOMEN EXCEPT WIVES OF FOREIGN MINISTER, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DISTRICT, AMBASSADOR LANG, CHILEAN AMBASSADOR, AND DIRECTOR OF INFONAC.

- - DEMANDS OF FSLN AS GIVEN ARCHBISHOP WERE (1) \$5 MILLION RANSOM, (2) FREEING OF 14 "POLITICAL" PRISONERS, (3) PUBLICATION OF FSLN MANIFESTOS, (4) SAFE CONDUCT AND PASSAGE TO CUBA, (5) TOTAL SUSPENSION OF ALL REPRESSIVE MEASURES, (6) ABSOLUTE FREEDOM OF PRESS TO REPORT EVENTS RELATING TO INCIDENT AND (7) DECREE INCREASING MINIMUM WAGE AND A MONTH'S SALARY BONUS FOR MOST WORKERS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF NATIONAL GUARD. TERRORISTS STATED DEMANDS WERE NON-NEGOTIABLE.

9:00 - 10:00 A.M. - CHIEFS OF MISSION OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS MET AND LATER ASSEMBLED IN PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S OFFICE AND ASKED THAT IN VIEW OF CHILEAN AMBASSADOR'S PRESENCE AMONG HOSTAGES HE URGENTLY REQUEST THAT DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, PAPAL NUNCIO, WHO WAS IN HONDURAS, RETURN TO MANAGUA.

10:00 A.M. - SOMOZA SENT HIS FIRST WRITTEN RESPONSE TO TERRORISTS DEMANDS VIA ARCHBISHOP.

- - ARCHBISHOP RETURNED FROM MEETING SAYING TERRORISTS INSISTED DEMANDS WERE NON-NEGOTIABLE AND REJECTED OFFER OF PROP PLANE, INSISTING ON JET AIRCRAFT.

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- - THE ARCHBISHOP AND ANOTHER PRIEST ENTERED THE CASTILLO HOUSE SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE DAY OF DECEMBER 28 AND EARLY MORNING OF DECEMBER 29, ACTING AS COURIERS, CARRYING MESSAGES BETWEEN SOMOZA AND TERRORISTS AND DELIVERING FOOD AND MEDICINE. ARCHBISHOP APPARENTLY SERVED ONLY MESSENGER FUNCTION AND DID NOT INDEPENDENTLY NEGOTIATE ON DEMANDS.

- - DURING COURSE OF DAY DECEMBER 28, SPANISH AMBASSADOR CONTACTED SPANISH EMBASSY IN HAVANA AND MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH

GOVERNMENT OF CUBA FOR ACCEPTANCE OF TERRORISTS AND SAFE RETURN OF PLANE AND HOSTAGES.

- - MEANWHILE, U.S. CURRENCY WAS OBTAINED FOR RANSOM BY SPECIAL PLANE FROM NEW YORK.

DEC 29 - 9:45 A.M. - REMAINING FIVE WOMEN ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE WITH ARCHBISHOP.

4:00 - 7:00 P.M. - ARCHBISHOP AND PAPAL NUNCIO MET WITH TERRORISTS AFTER WHICH THEY CONSULTED WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AND BRIEFED DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

11:00 P.M. - ARCHBISHOP AND PAPAL NUNCIO RETURNED FOR ANOTHER SESSION WITH FSLN WHICH LASTED MOST OF THE NIGHT DURING WHICH FINAL DETAILS OF AGREEMENT WERE CONCLUDED.

DEC 30 -11:30 A.M. - FSLN TERRORISTS, 13 HOSTAGES, PAPAL NUNCIO, ARCHBISHOP, MEXICAN AMBASSADOR AND SPANISH AMBASSADOR TRANSPORTED TO AIRPORT IN BUS. THIRTEEN HOSTAGES WERE RELEASED AT AIRPORT.

12:10 P.M. - LANICA JET DEPARTED AIRPORT WITH TERRORISTS, 14 FREED PRISONERS (WHO AWAITED THEM IN PLANE WITH UNDISCLOSED AMOUNT OF RANSOM MONEY) AND FOUR SURROGATE HOSTAGES ABOARD.

7:48 P.M. - PLANE RETURNED FROM CUBA WITH ARCHBISHOP, PAPAL NUNCIO, MEXICAN AND SPANISH AMBASSADORS.

2. COMMENT: FSLN'S ABILITY TO CARRY OUT A TERRORIST ACT ON THIS SCALE CAME AS A SHOCK TO MOST NICARAGUANS. GIVEN THE SUCCESS OF THIS OPERATION, COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES WE CAN IN THE FUTURE EXPECT MORE DRAMATIC, TERRORIST ACTS OF THIS KIND FROM THE FSLN. OBVIOUSLY THE GROUP HAS ACCESS TO RESOURCES TO CARRY OUT SUCH OPERATIONS, AND THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DRAW UPON A NOW LARGER GROUP, ESPECIALLY YOUTH, ENCOURAGED BY THE SUCCESS OF THIS INCIDENT.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, EMBASSY DOES NOT WANT TO OVERESTIMATE THE CAPABILITIES OF THE FSLN AT THIS POINT. TERRORISTS PARTICIPATING IN THIS INCIDENT WERE OBVIOUSLY HIGHLY TRAINED, DISCIPLINED AND
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COMPLETELY DEDICATED. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE FSLN HAS LARGE NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL OF SIMILAR CALTBRE IN NICARAGUA, HOWEVER, THE FSLN HAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT IT HAS CAPABILITY TO ASSEMBLE A STRIKE GROUP IN NICARAGUA AND MORE IMPORTANT, HAS THE SUPPORT ORGANIZATION TO AID IN WHATEVER ACTION SUCH A GROUP PLANS TO CARRY OUT.

4. FSLN APPARENTLY DTD NOT KNOW FOR SURE WHO WOULD BE IN THE CASTILLO HOUSE. THEY DID KNOW AMBASSADOR SHELTON WAS THERE AND IT APPEARS THAT THEY WAITED UNTIL HE DEPARTED TO MOUNT THEIR ATTACK. ONE OF THE HOSTAGES, TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE WAS INFORMED BY THE LEADER OF THE TERRORIST GROU THAT THEY HAD WAITED AND HOUR FOR AMBASSADOR SHELTON TO LEAVE. THE AMBASSADOR FOUR WELL ARMED GUARDS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN A DETERRENT TO AN EARLIER ATTACK. THER WERE HOWEVER, OTHER AMBASSADORS AT THE

PARTY (THE CHILEAN WAS TAKEN PRISONER; THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN THERE BUT LEFT BEFORE THE ATTACK), AND THE FSLN DECLARATION PUBLISHED DECEMBER 31 INDICATES THAT THEIR ORIGINAL TDFA WAS TO TAKE ONLY DIPLOMATCS PRISONER. SINCE CASTTLO'S PARTY IN HONON OF AMBASSADOR SHELTON WAS PUBLIXIZED IN A LOCAL NEWSPAPER FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT HIS PRESENTED A CONVENTENT TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY, AS IT WOULD BE EXPECTED DIPLOMATS WOULD BE ATTENDING. EMBASSY THEREFOR IS CONCERNED THAT DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL WILL BE TARTESTS OF FUTURE FSLN ATTACKS.

5. IN REACTION TO THIS TERRORIST INCIDENT, PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED IN A NEW YEAR'S EVE SPEECH THAT THE STAFE OF SEIGE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE INVESTIGATIONS IS COMPLETE AND IT IS ESTABLISHED WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE. EMBASSY EXPECTS A GENERAL TIGHTENING UP WITH ROUNDING UP OF NUMEROUS SUSPECTS WHO ARE THOUGHT TO BE CONNECTED WITH THE FSLN. THERE IS A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY OF OVER-REACTION BY THE GON IN MEETING THIS THREAT, ESPECIALLY IN ANY ARMED CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN THE FSLN AND THE NATIONAL GUARD. PRESIDENT SOMOZA WILL HAVE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT WHICH SO FAR HE HAS DONE, IF HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO CONTAIN THE PROBLEM RATHER THAN EXACERBATE IT BY ANTAGONIZING OPPOSITION ELEMENTS WHICH MAY NOT NOW BE SUPPORTIVE OF THE FSLN'S TERRORIST APPROACH. SHELTON. UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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